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5 May 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Knoche

[REDACTED]  
Mr. Proctor

SUBJECT : PFIAB Study

1. Attached is a copy of the paper submitted to the PFIAB by the three-man subcommittee -- chaired by Bob Galvin -- which the Board appointed last December to scrutinize the Community's performance in strategic estimates. As you know, the other two members of the subcommittee are Drs. John Foster and Edward Teller.

2. In my opinion, it is essential that we not be unduly defensive in reacting to this document or in any way convey the impression that we are loathe to consider innovative procedures which might improve the quality of our strategic assessments. On the other hand, some of the concrete proposals advanced by the Board would be extremely difficult to accommodate without prostituting the whole intelligence process. This applies particularly to the proposal (about which the Board feels very strongly) for a "competitive analysis group" which would be tasked with preparing -- on certain selected issues -- what would in effect be an alternative estimate to 11-3/8-76.

3. The basic problem is the fact that the Board's concrete recommendations derive from a perception of what intelligence is and ought to be which is quite different than ours -- and in this case, I am personally convinced we are right and the Board, wrong. The game (unintentionally) is given away in three sentences in the NIE Evaluation Committee's paper:

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- "...whether or not a particular technical judgment in the NIE is correct or incorrect is less significant than whether the document illuminates for a busy decision maker the range of threat possibilities and their implications relative to his special responsibilities." (Paragraph 6, pp 2-3).
- [One of the four purposes an NIE serves is to] "Support Congressional authorization and appropriation proceedings." (Paragraph 17b, p. 6. A similar thought is echoed in paragraph 29 on page 9: "...during Congressional hearings, the NIE may present serious problems to Defense officials whose programs are based on different threat appraisals.")
- [NIEs] should be measured by whether they stimulate policy makers to face up to hard decisions in sufficient time to make a difference and by the thoroughness with which threats, uncertainties and alternatives have been illuminated." (Paragraph 34, p. 11).

4. What the Board wants is a national estimate which will set forth all the things -- especially the unpleasant things -- which the Soviets could or might do, without any estimative judgments about the relative probability of the Soviets achieving these various goals or pursuing these alternative lines of behavior. The real reason (I think) why some members of the Board are pushing for "the competitive estimate" by a group composed of at least some persons outside the Intelligence Community is that they want to be sure that the total package includes all the worst case possibilities that can be thought of. Under the approach the Board is recommending, the President and his senior policy advisors will simply have this range of possibilities laid before them, hence, powerful arguments could be advanced that the only responsible course to follow to protect the nation's interests would be to hedge against the worst case threats, and NIEs developed through the recommended procedure would serve as ammunition supporting such a pitch. If our nation's resources were infinite, this


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might be an intellectually defensible thesis. They are not, however and, hence, it isn't. This procedure would leave the decision maker at the mercy of technical shamans with no basis for ascertaining which of these shamans' analyses or predictions were more credible than their competitors'.

5. Per our discussion at the 5 May Executive Committee meeting, I urge that copies of the attached paper not -- repeat not -- be circulated. Its language, in many places, is outrageous and (with reason) would be taken as deeply offensive by many hardworking professionals who are fully conscious of their own fallibility but have devoted their careers to providing our government with the most objective and balanced assessments attainable by mortals operating with less than total information. Bob Galvin, an eminently decent person trying to do a very serious job, is most anxious to avoid initiating a paper war for reasons I consider obvious, commendable and entirely persuasive. I plan to talk quietly with him in order to try to separate the concrete recommendations -- several of which are well worth trying -- from the philosophy behind some of them which we cannot endorse. I am reasonably confident that through quiet dialogue we can develop a set of experiments which may actually prove helpful, will put the DCI in the posture of being responsive to the board and which, at the same time, will not sacrifice our principles or things all of us believe in very deeply.

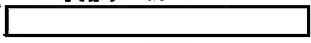
  
George A. Carver, Jr.

Deputy for National Intelligence Officers

O/D/DCI/NIO:GACarver/kes

Distribution

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